



THE THIRTIETH VIRGINIA AT BOYDTON PLANK ROAD

Gallant Company Commander Writes His Recollections of Hot Encounter Near Dinwiddie Courthouse and of Other Scenes.

BY ROBERT T. KNOX,

Lieutenant Commanding Company C

I give my recollections of the fight on Boydton Plank Road, near or at Dinwiddie Courthouse, March 31, 1865. The division I belonged to was Pickett's. We were ordered from Howlett House and marched to a church near Boydton Plank Road, went to camp next day, and then marched down towards a run before we got to Boydton Plank Road.

Our regiment—Thirtieth Virginia Infantry—was thrown out as skirmishers in front of Corse's Brigade. We went on until we came to a point with Sheridan's cavalry. We had passed many wounded of our cavalry, and majors and other officers were being brought out of the fight hanging over the saddles of their horses. My recollection is it was a North Carolina regiment. Well, we went through the woods on the far side of the run mentioned, and in our front in the woods the enemy's cavalry had gone into camp and were in the act of cooking. We found them in force on our right, and opened fire on them. The rest of our brigade came up and we laid down to let them pass us, and joined on their right and went until we were stopped by orders. We had a right smart fight with Sheridan's cavalry and drove away from them. We were on our left when we reached the Plank Road and in our front, and when our brigade came up they wheeled to the right and fought almost hand to hand.

My cousin, Robert F. Knox, captain of a company in General Lee's army, was wounded standing or fighting in the road, and the enemy standing up above and shooting down, and Robert was shot through the ball passing over under his shoulder blades; so you can see we were close and hotly engaged. My brother, Alexander, was shot as we reached the Plank Road. He was shot through the leg and was taken to a hospital. We whipped the cavalry and could see ambulances, and saw an artillery firing, helter skelter down the road near the courthouse, which I never saw, but we saw the rout of the cavalry as they fled. We remained there in the field all night. Next morning we were ordered down to Five Forks, on Hatcher's Run. All of Jackson's old army, General Johnson's Division—passed us, and we asked if they were not going to help us—and, I believe, three of Pickett's brigades went off, passing behind us. They said they were obeying orders. To a company of men, I was ordered from our regiment to our front about half mile perhaps in front and directly in rear of Gilham's house. We could see Sheridan's whole corps massed in fields in front of Gilham's house. There were two regiments of W. H. Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry on our right. The Ninth Virginia and Thirtieth Virginia, I think, were on our right at right angles to our skirmish line.

Soon Sheridan sent two or more squadrons to charge us. There were a goodly number of them. They were ordered back to the road, where our regiment was. They emptied some saddles and drove the others off, and we were ordered to take our old position in the field.

My orderly sergeant, Morgan Cox, "Lieutenant," look back at the road where our regiment was. There they were on this side the fence with their backs to my skirmish line fighting Claiborne's Division, Infantry, and fought them so stoutly and with such determination that they fell back. Our brigade resumed their first position. Then Morgan said again: "Lieutenant, look down on our left; can you make out what that is?" I looked, and shortly saw it was another division of the cavalry, and came steadily through the woods, and sent my men to fall back to our line. By this time General Corse had joined his line on the cavalry regiments on our left, so as to face not only Claiborne's Division, but the whole of them. This was about 3 in the afternoon of April 1, 1865.

This infantry which came up on our left was the other part of General Warren's Infantry Corps. There were no troops there on our right. Corse's Brigade and these two cavalry regiments that I know of. So there we fought. They charged and charged, but we drove them back three or four times. At one time some one had a United States flag at the head of the charge and nearly reached the Gilham house, but were driven back. I saw Brigadier-General Steuart, of Maryland, calmly sitting on his horse watching the fight. His brigade had gone. He was in charge of a brigade in Pickett's division at that time.

It was behind our regiment that Colonel William Pegram was killed. My brother, Captain James S. Knox, said to him: "Will you cannot do any good here; now, get out of your horse—you are too good a mark—and come here with us." He said: "Knox, I am not going to stay here long; I have other artillery elsewhere." What watching the fight. His brigade had gone. He was in charge of a brigade in Pickett's division at that time.

Contributions to this column are requested from Confederate veterans and other persons familiar with the history of the War Between the States. Contributions of particular interest are those of persons who were engaged in the war. Contributions are especially requested. All contributions should be sent to the Editor of the Confederate Column, Times-Dispatch, Richmond, Va.

own action in a general convention, such as formed by the Constitution. "An each State has its own consent delegate certain powers and reserve the rest, so must each State grant any additional power as the only means by which it can be justly deprived of it.

"Force may prevail over right, but cannot destroy truth.

"The exercise of a power to coerce a State cannot give to that act constitutional authority, but it has been so acquiesced in that the remedy of secession by an oppressed minority must be considered impracticable.

"The South never asked for more than a fair construction of the Constitution as interpreted by the man who made it, and in the future that can be secured we may be content, though we cannot surrender a right even while admitting our inability to maintain it.

"It was much gratified by the expression of your opinion in regard to the past, and tender to you my sincere regards.

"Respectfully, and truly yours,"

"JEFFERSON DAVIS."

A clearer, more succinctly stated exposition of the South's viewpoint and the South's conviction and the South's frame of mind with reference to the war, could scarcely have been rendered than that given by Mr. Davis fifteen years after the conflict ended. We commend it especially to the general attention of Southerners now about to take their place in the ranks of men, as a subject well worth their careful consideration. In a few lines it codifies the reasons the South made a so valiant and costly defense.

Mr. Brown the Author.

In preparing for publication the article sent by Thomas L. Brown, of Charleston, West Virginia, to the "Confederate Column" in 1888 for collecting funds for a monument to Stonewall Jackson, we erroneously spelled his name "Brown." We wish to make this correction in justice to the distinguished gentleman who was the author of the article, which was first published in the "Confederate Column."

THE SOUTHERN CROSS OF HONOR.

By Prof. C. B. Tate, a V. M. I. cadet who fought in the battle of New Market, Va., May 15, 1864.

Take these crosses—a mute token Of a sorrow left unspoken By the lips of love unbroken Through the change of Time and Tide.

In a comrade's tears you'll have them, From dishonor live to save them, For the sake of those who gave them, For the sake of those who died.

Prize these badges as a treasure Precious—priceless beyond measure, Consecrated by a love Deep and boundless—the ocean— True woman's life devotion— Love like His who reigns above.

Lee, the matchless, would have worn it, Stonewall Jackson would have worn it Proudly. Death's strong hand could scarce have torn it.

From our princely Stuart's breast, Fold it, Veteran, as an omen Sacred as the tear of woman Shed for chivalry or woman.

Nobler than the other, Shed for comrade laid to rest.

Southern Veterans, wear these crosses, Emblems of our Southland's losses— Losses death alone can't drown, When Sin's hosts their arms have ground.

He in whom our faith is founded— Who bore the cross—for us was wounded— Will for each cross exchange a crown.

But when in Heaven's perfect light, The day He counts His jewels bright, Condemns the wrong, rewards the right.

In those He died to save, The richest crown for love, for loss, Without one taint of earthly dross, To her will go—last at His cross And earliest at His grave, PULASKI, VA.

IN THE RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTRY.

"Brooke's Bank"

There are some magnificent estates and mansions in Essex county, many of which have been the homes of the owners living in some other locality. Unfortunately "we two" could not penetrate far into the interior on this memorable trip, and we had to miss the opportunity of getting into the "Brooke's Bank" places.

"Brooke's Bank" is a beautiful and ancient seat. The ancestor, as it were, of "Farmer's Hall," "St. Julian," "Oakland," "Mantapike" and other later Brooke homes scattered throughout Virginia.

Robert Brooke, the first of his family in Virginia, settled in Essex county about 1659, for in this year he married Catharine, daughter of Humphrey Booth. His sons were Robert (2), Humphrey (2) and William (2). Robert (2) was a knight of the Order of the Horse, as we all know. His wife was Phoebe, and his estate "Farmer's Hall," in Essex county. He left this place to his son, Robert (3), who in turn left it to his daughter, Mary. She married the late Sir John Brooke, and the family of Sales comes from this union. William (2) Brooke married Sarah Tallaferrero, and the "Brooke's Bank" mansion was built by her after her husband's death, but according to his wishes. He died in 1718, but the house was not built until 1751.

It is a brick, mellowed by nearly two centuries of storm and sunshine. Staunch, square and two-storied, with fine porches and a splendid hall running through the house from one end to the other.

"Brooke's Bank" suffered terribly during the war. Though separated from the Rappahannock by soft and smiling terraces, it was near enough to feel the crash of the Pawnee shells and to suffer from the heat of the sun. One of these shells—as I mentioned in a former paper—jarred a secret panel from the wall and priceless papers fell out like imprisoned spirits, and many a life became lost to the world.

Sarah Tallaferrero Brooke left "Brooke's Bank" to her son, William, who married Ann Benger, niece of Lady Spotswood. He died early, and the estate went to his sister, Sarah. Her will was made in 1781, and she left it to her brother, John Brooke, who married Lucy Thornton. He left it to William Thornton Brooke in 1788, who married Mary Whitings. He left it to his son, William Hill Brooke, and here the family of Brooke kept up for five generations.

Dr. Walton Saunders purchased "Brooke's Bank" in 1880, and his widow, who afterwards married Sir George Hopkins, is the present owner. He kept the place in good order and treasures the tradition with which it abounds.

Judge Wellford tells us that "Higher up on the peninsula was a steamboat wharf, even in my own day, bearing the name of the Duke of Northampton. In old Colonial days it indulged in high aspirations to be a commercial port. Just around this wharf were three handsome estates, owned by Henry Taylor, a younger son of John Taylor, of Caroline, namely, 'Bunker Hill,' 'Leeds' and 'Penn Farm.' Mr. Taylor's family resided for some time at 'Bunker Hill,' but the grounds being considered unhealthy, he bought a summer home of three or four miles back from the river on the right bank of the Potomac. He had a beautiful view of the river and the city of Washington. He had a beautiful view of the river and the city of Washington. He had a beautiful view of the river and the city of Washington.

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It needs no military education to appreciate the inestimable benefit Colonel Mosby's "wolfpack" riders were to the South when on the march. Every one has seen a swift fox terrier worry a dignified bull into a lather by biting at his heels, and then, at early dawn, a dash in the evening twilight forty miles away; that was the daily program of his tireless troopers.

A notable instance of this was Mosby's attack on Sheridan's main train at the end of 1864, when that general was moving up the Shenandoah Valley for the purpose of cutting off Richmond on the west. Lee, who had no force available to meet him, sent urgent word to Mosby to delay him at all possible points.

It is what is called in racing parlance a hundred to one shot, for Sheridan had 80,000 men, Mosby 600. Nothing daunted, Mosby took that number, and at dawn one morning attacked Sheridan's train as they were moving out of Berryville. Fortune favored him with a heavy fog, and in the mist the thunder of a few cannons and the wails of his pistol (troopers sounded to the surprised and frightened teamsters like Satan's hosts. They fled after a brief and bloody fight, leaving in his hands hundreds of fat wagons and beef cattle, which were safely away from the mountains and on the road to Lee's hungry army at Richmond before Sheridan, "ten miles away" got news of it. Thus chiseled out of his dinner and jolted out of his regular meal-times, Sheridan was compelled to return and spend six valuable weeks in preparing for a fresh start.

His warfare was peculiarly his own. The enemy could not reach him save by a long march. When they did not want to fight, he scattered his command far and wide along the country side, to assemble them again whenever propitious occasion for an attack presented itself.

His horse charged that his men went in disguise or in Federal uniform. This was never the case; they always fought in the Confederate gray. Mosby never lost a fight.

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